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Agriculture

ALL AROUND THE FARM.

EDITED BY BENJ. IRBY, RALEIGH, N. C.

Prof. Benj. Irby, late Professor of Agriculture, Agricultural and Mechanical College Raleigh, has become a regular contributor to this department. All questions relating to the farm garden or orchard will be answered by Prof. Irby.

HAS A PERFECT EAR OF CORN.

Farmer Makes a Find Which Might Bring Him $1,000

An ear of corn which Patrick Cullen believes to be worth a small fortune is being carefully preserved by that individual, who recently found his prize on Farmer Upright's place at Merion Square, Montgomery county. To the ordinary city man there is really nothing remarkable about the ear of corn. Its kernels are not of solid gold, nor are there any diamonds concealed about the cob.

Its value lies in the fact that somewhere at sometime or other some agricultural society offered a reward of $1,000 to anyone who would find a perfect ear of corn with the kernels growing in an uneven number of rows. It has always been found that the rows are even, say 10, 12, or 14, to a cob. This ear which Patrick Cullen found, however, shows 13 rows around the butt and 11 around the middle of the cob. Many farmers to whom Cullen showed his prize assured him that the ear was as perfect as it could be, and that it was really a curiosity. Cullen is now looking for the agricultural society which offered the $1,000 reward. —Philadelphia Record.

PAPERS IN THE FARMERS' HOME

We cannot overestimate the value of periodicals of the day—that is, the really good periodicals—in the education of the young. They are quite as *important* as the school teacher. In fact, the good paper or magazine is a teacher in the training school of life, and exerts an influence powerful for good, but not fully appreciated because it does its work so quietly. Take away good periodicals and the value and importance of them would soon be apparent.

The education secured from good books and papers is practical. It appeals to the individual, not to the class, and its influence is directly on the character and the formation of it. I think it is all the more powerful because it does not set itself up as authority, as the text books of our schools do, to a great extent. We come to consider them more as friends and companions than as professional teachers, and they influence us more because there is no evident intention, on their part, to do so, in the sense of educational work. We do not feel, in reading them, that we are studying. We are amusing ourselves, but unconsciously, we are receiving impressions quite strong as any that ever come from deliberate study, and, in many instances, much more lasting.

It is not necessary, nowadays, to be a traveler in order to know something about the world. We can see a great deal of it through the eyes of others. We can make ourselves familiar with lands we may never visit. We may understand life in all its phases, the world round, better from a keen eyed traveler's description of it than we would if we were to become travelers; for travel, as a general thing, distracts the mind of the ordinary man from details and he comes home with a confusion of ideas which results from seeing more things than he can easily digest, mentally. The true traveler—the traveler born for the calling—grasps the more important details, the salient features, and in a magazine article condenses more information than we might be able to get in a long time by living among the people of whom he writes. It is so with most of the leading subjects of interest. They cover so broad a field that we cannot expect to investigate each one, personally, and become familiar with all phases of them. But the man who makes a speciality of some one of them can give us information that will enable us to gain a pretty good opinion of them, in a general way, and by keeping up with the work of these specialists in the various departments of life we can feel that we are in touch with progress in all departments of art, science and literature.

The farmers' boys should be provided not only with general literature, but also with the best of periodicals, making a specialty of farm life and its interests. Encourage them to read and to think. If the farmer would read these periodicals with his boys and talk about the articles with them, the value of such reading would be largely increased. Discussion brings out the important ideas as nothing else can, except a practical working out of them, and this will naturally follow the discussion of them, in many instances. Encourage the boys to look at matters from a practical rather than from a theoretical standpoint, and they will become keen critics, and you will be surprised at the judgment and good sense displayed by them in their analysis of an article. If any of them show an aptitude for this or that business, get them the best periocal specially devoted to it, and help them to information that can be depended on as reliable. Of course, personal experience will be necessary, later on, if they take up any of these lines of business, but by the assistance of such information they can acquire a general knowledge before starting out in business, that will be of immense benefit to them, as it will do away with the necessity of learning a great deal by personal experience.

The daily paper is an important factor in the development of the boy on the farm. It keeps him in touch with the world outside. It makes him feel that he is part of it because he knows what is going on there. He takes pride in keeping himself posted about current events. I have been pleased to note the manner in which many farmers' boys make use of the daily paper. They read it carefully; they remember what they read, and they are actually more familiar with what is going on in the world than many of their city cousins. They read for information, and the information they get is made use of in one way or another. An item of information may not be of great benefit in itself, but the habit of gathering these items is of the utmost help. Never read carelessly, boys. Read to remember. Too many persons, nowadays, seem to read with the intention of forgetting what they read as soon as possible. And they generally succeed in doing it; also in forming a habit of letting information—slip through their minds like water through a sieve. Those who read in this manner are harmed by reading. They would be better off if they were not to read anything.

Be sure to get the best reading. Some periodicals try to gain patrons by the plea that they are cheap. If their articles are cheap, as well as their subscription price, they will prove to be dear at any price. In books and periodicals, as well as in most other things the best is the cheapest in the long run, and the extra money required to get those we know to be good will turn out to be an investment of the most satisfactory kind.—Eben E. Rexford, in Wisconsin Agriculturist.

EACH MAN A STUDENT.

Prof. Charles F. Vanderford, in Southern States Farm Magazine of Baltimore for February:

One of the first things to be done whenever the farmer will set about permanent improvement of his lands is to prevent surface washing. In the "laying off" for planting, in the direction of the longer furrows when breaking the land and which will allow a modified system of terraces or of surface drains must be so directed as to catch the surface waters and deliver them at the foot of the slope by a gentle descent of not more than one foot to five hundred—one inch to forty feet of drain. There must be careful consideration in advance and equally careful execution of plans adopted. It is best that all of the rain shall percolate into the land upon which it falls and that it shall not flow upon the surface. This is rarely possible in the open fields, even under the best conditions; but there should be endeavor in this direction, not only for the conservation of plant food, but to lessen the injury to the physical condition of the soil which always comes from the rapid movement of overflow waters. Wherever upon nearly level lands (except, of course, the small areas of alluvials subject to overflow), the rain waters submerge the fields and remain standing for hours, or for days, as the writer has seen in the red clay sections, at the first opportunity the under soil should be deepened. The use of the sub soil plow in midsummer or early fall is here indicated as the next best thing to thorough underdrainage.

THE INDEPENDENT FARMER.

A farmer drove up to a shoe store, hitched his team and stepped within. "Good morning, Mr. Rippskin," he said.

"Ah, good morning, Mr. Landside, nice morning; anything I can do for you to-day!"

"Well, yes, I think you can, that is, if we can make a deal. You see times are pretty dull, and I ain't sold anything yet. I want a pair of shoes for my wife, and a couple pairs for the boys, and as you know what sort of butter we make, I put in a jar of that and a few dozen of nice, fresh eggs. I thought perhaps I could turn 'em for some shoes."

"I'm sorry, Mr. Landside, for I like your butter, but we've got a good supply on hand now, and as for the eggs, I bought some this morning. What are you asking for your butter?"

"Mr. Hayfield had some in yesterday and he told me he got 18 cents."

"Whew! Hayfield must have found somebody soft. Why, I can buy a carload for 14 cents; that's the market; but you're an old customer, Mr. Landside, and you make good butter. Seeing you'll trade it out, I won't mind giving you a cent over the market."

"Can't you split the difference and make it 16?"

"Couldn't possibly; times are dull with me, too."

"Will you take the eggs, too?"

"That's according to what you want for them; they're way down, you know."

"Hayfield got 14 cents for his."

"Hum! Must have sold his eggs where he did his butter. Twelve cents is the market. You can bring 'em in at that if you want to."

A few minutes later, the shoe deal begins.

"How much is this pair, Mr. Rippskin?"

"Those are solid calf, handsewed and a bargain at $2.75."

"Can't you let 'em go at $2 50?"

"I couldn't think of it; then here's just what you want for the boys—only $2 25 a pair—just the thing."

"I think you ought to throw off the extra quarter."

"O, that's rock bottom, Mr. Landside. Those are the right sizes, too. Shall I put 'em up for you?"

"I suppose so. Now, how do we stand?"

"Let me see; 34 pounds of butter at 15c. is $5.10; nine dozens of eggs at 12 is $1 08; total $6 18. Twice $2 25 is $4.50 and $2 75 makes $7 25; $6 18 from $7 25 leaves $1.07 coming to me. O, give me a dollar, that's near enough"—deftly transferring the dollar to his till. "How's crops this year, Mr. Landside?"

"Only middling, and what with low prices and an overstocked market one can scarcely scrape along."

"Ha, ha! Too bad for you fellows. I sometimes wish I were a farmer; it's the most independent life one can live."

"Yes, seems to me I've heard some such talk before. I come in here, you set your price on my produce and I am obliged to take it. I buy goods of you and you set your own price on them. If I don't like your prices I can let your goods alone. O, yes, we're an independent lot, we farmers."—W. T. Becker, in American Agriculturist.

WHEAT AND CORN.

The New York Journal of Commerce, comparing these two important crops, says:

"From no point of view can wheat be regarded as the peer of maize, except that it realizes a higher price. The corn crop occupies 82,000,000 acres; wheat only 34 000,000 acres. The quantity of the product of corn now averages about 2,000 000,000 bushels; that of wheat about 450,000 000 bushels; while the value of the former averages $600,000,000 and of the latter on an average from 1890 to 1895, only $300,000,000. True, the exports of wheat reach a much higher value than those of corn, the average valuation of the former, for the six years 1890 to 1895, having been $157 000,000 and of the latter only $60,000,000. But, in this branch of the trade, corn is fast gaining upon wheat, the exports for the first nine months of the current year having amounted in value to $47,000,000, while the shipments of wheat and flour are valued at $95,000,000; in making this comparison, however, it is to be remembered that this year our wheat exports have been extraordinary both in quantity and market value.

"In the economy of domestic consumption, corn holds a far more important rank than wheat. Among a largely preponderant part of our population it furnishes a variety of whole some articles of diet. It is the basis of our hog produce, the exports of which are valued at about $90,000,000 per year. It is also a leading article of food for cattle, excelling all other grains in cheapness and feeding qualities. It is the basis of our production of distilled spirits, of starch and of glucose. It has been demonstrated by competent scientists who have thoroughly investigated the physiological characteristics of the plant and its structural conditions at various stages of its growth, that, in addition to its present various uses, it may be made to yield products of immense commercial demand and which would very largely add to the profitableness of American farming in those sections where corn can be raised. Many may regard these statements with incredulity, but they are based upon more than mere possibilities, upon possibilities that are even now approaching realization."

Money in bank is never half so profitable as manure in the field. To skimp the field for the bank is to make a mistake. What the intensive farmer needs to do is to put back to his land as freely as the land is found to give. To give on a farm is to get. Ten acres well fed are worth a hundred starved. This is the experience of everybody that knows anything about the matter. Living in the country is costless, because with a little turning around a man makes the rinds of his fruit worth as much as the pulps that have been eaten. To enjoy one's watermelons and then to give to the pigs the rinds is to put back more than has been taken. To use the straw gathered at mid-summer for the winter bedding of horse or cow is to put it at fabulous interest. Cider let alone doubles its value by turning into vinegar. Calves fed from pickings that are without other value grow into butter giving cows. Colts, taking a milk that nothing else cares to drink, develop into plough-pulling horses.—Southern Progress.

REAL BLUE GRASS.

One of the standing jokes of the blue grass region is the fact that "blue grass" is green. People who visit the famous rich grazing country found in Kentucky are often the subject for jokes when they want the "blue grass" pointed out. But there is a blue grass, a sample of which can be found growing at the Department of Agriculture, which is as blue as a cloudless sky on a summer day. It is a native of the Apache country. It can be found all through New Mexico and in some of the adjoining states. It is known as the Apache blue grass. It has a broad spear and grows a couple of feet in height. A field covered with it looks like a lake in which has been dumped a barrel of indigo. It is said to be one of the most beautiful sights of the Southwest to view great fields of this blue grass, dotted here and there with flowers. Especial attention has been paid to the cultivation of a patch of this grass at the Department of Agriculture, where it grows luxuriantly, and is one of the interesting sights to all visitors to the grounds of that department.—Washington Star.

OBJECT LESSON TO FARMERS.

There are some few farmers to be found who make an independent living, despite the hard times and the low price of cotton. One of them is Mr. Thomas Ritter, of Carter's Mills, this county. Mr. Ritter is 56 years of age and has a family of fourteen children. He has farmed all his life and has never bought a bushel of corn, a pound of bacon, a pound of flour or a pound of anything else that can be raised on the farm, but has always kept these things on hand for sale. He never owed any man a cent and never buys anything from the store except coffee and sugar and such other things as he can't raise at home. He has fat horses, hogs, cows and poultry and his table is always furnished with the very best that a good farm can furnish. He raised one bale of cotton this year and says that it makes little difference with him whether it is five or ten cents a pound. Mr. Ritter reads the newspapers and keeps well posted in regard to current topics. The secret of his success as a farmer is that he raises all his own supplies and pays little attention to cotton. The country would be better off if we had more farmers like Mr. Ritter. He has a brother who has been equally as successful as a farmer.

A FARMERS' TRUST.

Because Southern farmers are trying to make a combination to control the acreage and marketing of cotton, a great howl has gone up from the metropolitan press. They say it will be the biggest trust of all, if this scheme to limit the product and fix the price of cotton succeeds. We observe that this anti-trust talk is very loud in certain papers whenever farmers try to help themselves, but such journals keep still when the big corporations are putting on the screws. If there ever was a body of people who needed to look after their own interests it is the cotton planters. They can't and won't organize a trust, but they can do a good deal to improve their conditions. The high price of cotton for the past two years has had its logical result in an increased acreage, an immense crop and the lowest values on record. We hope that the present high prices for wheat will not lead to similar overproduction and consequent low prices within a year or two, though we confess to fears in this direction.—Farm and Home.

USE OF FERTILIZERS.

Prof. Martin P. Scott in Southern States Farm Magazine, of Baltimore, for February:

You cannot, by the use of commercial fertilizers alone, make your land rich. Indeed, if they are ignorantly applied, the result will be the impoverishment of the soil. If you add $10 to your bank account and check out $10, you know the result. In like manner, when you use a small quantity of your fertilizer, it grows a vigorous plant, which enables it to gather fertility from the soil largely in excess of the materials added by the fertilizer. Judiciously used, they are a great boon to the farmer. But, I repeat, the best method of using the phosphates and potash salts is on the pea and clover crops. It ensures, as a rule, a fine crop of these renovators."

DON'T THROW LAND AWAY.

It is a mistake to let the pastures grow up to a mixture of brush and worthless wood. The owner should decide at once whether it is worth while to clear if off for pasture. If not let him do the next best thing, which is either to plant it to orchard trees or some valuable timber or nut tree. A field of pitch pines for instance, although it will not mature for 40 years, will even when half grown cause the land to sell for much more than if left to brush, says an exchange.

Apple trees can be grown on such land, although it is rather slow work. But anything profitable is better than the mixture of scrub oak, brush and berry bushes usually found on such land.

HORTICULTURE

A STUDY OF THE TREE.

If you wish to become thoroughly acquainted with the tree's mode of growth the first thing of importance to keep in view is the function of the "cambian layer"—the soft, spongy substance lying between the wood proper and the bark. The pulpy, porous substance is in reality a tissue of minute cells, visible only under the microscope, and apparently of the same size and shape in any given variety of tree. The cells lying nearest the bark contribute a permanent accration to the tree's covering, while those which lie nearest the wood slowly change from "cambian layer" to real wood fiber. In this way the bark becomes thicker each year, and at the same time the tree itself is permanently enlarged. In the spring and early summer the bark on all the trees is, to a certain extent, loosened to permit the cambian layer exercising its functions, and when this wholly ceases the result is manifest in the "ring" of new wood and the main layer of newly formed inner bark.

SWEET APPLES.

It does not cost half as much to cultivate an acre of fruit as an acre of potatoes or corn; while the amount obtained is greater than either, and all ready for the table without going through the process which the grain crop requires, of threshing and winnowing, and grinding, and kneading and baking. By planting rich, highly-flavored apples for stewing and for pies, instead of poor ones, each family may save from fifty to two hundred pounds of sugar annually, in sweetening and in spices. A friend of ours, says an Eastern writer, finds it cheaper to buy good fall pippins for fifty cents a bushel than poor sorts, sold as "cooking apples," for fifteen cents a bushel. He uses the Talman Sweeting largely for baking and for puddings, and thinks that an Indian apple pudding, made by this natural sweetening the cheapest and the best pudding in the world. He saves from $75 to $100 annually in the cost of his table by this fruit."—North American Horticulturist.

HOW TO SET OUT TREES.

In preparing to set out trees, shrubs, vines, etc., a hole should be dug large and deep, a foot at least larger than the natural spread of the roots, from the fact that a tree or anything set out should grow a year or two in good loam before it runs its roots into the original gravelly material; otherwise its progress in growing is apt to be very slow and sickly looking, if it lives at all. When setting out a tree, shrub or vine—in fact anything of size—the loam should not be shoveled in in a body, for any person can see that in this way it cannot be air-tight. Around the roots the loam should be very carefully shaken in, and at the same time using water, which will make a porridge of the loam so it can be carried into the least hole, crack or crevice, and thus it is made air tight around every fiber, which, the reader can see, is of great importance for the tree to start right away and so continue to grow right along. Trees often die from the effects of being set out in a hurry and the roots bent and cramped into a post hole. Anyone setting out trees in this way should wear a boot or shoe a few days, two sizes too small so it may cramp his toes; then he can pity the tree that has its roots cramped and bent to fit a small hole.—Woodward.

LIVE STOCK

A PLEA FOR PURE-BRED STOCK.

The great mistake in the average Southern farm to day is in the breeding of scrub stock of all descriptions instead of thoroughbreds. It seems that a great number of Southern farmers have a perfect mania for scrubs and crosses even when thoroughbreds have been purchased of some noted breed and strain, the characteristic of which took years and generations to establish. The prepotency is soon lost by this insatiable desire to cross breed. There was never a bigger blunder or mistake made, and I now enter my protest against scrub cows and razor backs in favor of pure-bred stock of all description. The scrub cow may be valuable in the range, and the razor back, when he often has a chance for life only because he has the qualities that enable him to outrun a nigger. But the conditions that may have warranted their existence in the past, have gradually given away before the intensive and modern methods of farming in the South. Let me further protest against scrub and crosses by reasoning a little from common sense view of the matter. Suppose you take a "Guernsey," that for generations has been bred and selected for the sole purpose of making butter, and cross with a Shorthorn that has for an equal length of time been bred for the sole purpose of making beef. Note the result two opposite qualities in one individual—the calf will usually lean toward the sire or vein that has the greatest prepotency powers and no one can tell the result of an animal that is bred with two conflicting heredities.

By the merest chance you may get a good individual from the first cross, but the chances are greatly against you; but continue to breed from crosses, it makes no difference whether horses, cows or swine or what the breeding is, or how long the pedigree, the ultimate results will be the same, and the further you continue to cross breeds, the further you get from the blood of the original parent and the nearer you get to "simon pure scrub." You are simply going backwards. We can never hope to combine in any animal all the good characteristics of all the other breeds. That little trick has

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 8]